

VZCZCXRO6699  
PP RUEHCHI RUEHDT RUEHHM  
DE RUEHML #0529/01 0370852  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
P 060852Z FEB 06  
FM AMEMBASSY MANILA  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9082  
INFO RUEHZS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS  
RHHMUNA/CDRUSPACOM HONOLULU HI  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 MANILA 000529

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EAP, EAP/MTS, EAP/MLS, INR/EAP, INR/B  
NSC FOR H. MORROW

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINS](#) [PINR](#) [ECON](#) [RP](#)  
SUBJECT: PRESIDENT ARROYO MAKES SEVERAL CHANGES TO HER  
CABINET

REF: A. OPS CENTER - MANILA 02/06/2006 TELCON

- [1](#)B. MANILA 0242
- [1](#)C. 05 MANILA 5688
- [1](#)D. 05 MANILA 4140
- [1](#)E. 05 MANILA 3154

[1](#)1. (U) This message is Sensitive but Unclassified. Please handle accordingly.

[1](#)2. (SBU) Summary: On February 5, Malacanang announced several changes to President Arroyo's Cabinet. Representative Ronaldo Puno replaced Angelo Reyes as Secretary of the Department of Interior and Local Government.

SIPDIS

Reyes will now head the Department of Environment and Natural Resources. Malacanang announced several other appointments and promised more in coming weeks. The Cabinet changes announced by Malacanang contained no major surprises. End Summary.

[1](#)3. (U) On February 5, Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita announced several changes to President Arroyo's Cabinet. Representative Ronaldo "Ronnie" Puno was appointed Secretary of the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG). (Note: Among other matters, DILG supervises the Philippine National Police. End Note.) Puno, who is head of the Pro-President Arroyo KAMPI party, played a central role in her 2004 presidential campaign. Puno also served as DILG Secretary under former president Estrada from 1999-2000 and

SIPDIS

was Assistant DILG Secretary during the Marcos Administration.

[1](#)4. (U) Secretary Angelo "Angie" Reyes, whom Puno is replacing, will now head the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR). This position has been vacant since January when then-secretary Mike Defensor became Chief of Staff at Malacanang (ref B). Reyes, who had been in the DILG position since July 2004, previously served as Secretary of National Defense (2001-2003). He also served as Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) under President Estrada, playing a key role in Estrada's January 2001 ouster. Reyes was reportedly offered the post of Ambassador to the U.S. but declined.

[1](#)5. (U) Malacanang announced several other changes to the Cabinet, including:

-- Eduardo Antonio Nachura was appointed as President

Arroyo's chief legal counsel, replacing Merceditas "Mercy" Gutierrez, who became head of the Office of the Ombudsman in December 2005 (ref C). Nachura, a former congressman from Western Samar in the central Philippines, assisted the Arroyo administration's successful effort to stave off impeachment in mid-2005 (ref D).

-- Representative Rolando Andaya was named Secretary of the Department of Budget and Management. The position was temporarily occupied by Romulo Neri following the resignation of Secretary Emilia Boncodin in July 2005 (per ref E, Boncodin subsequently joined opponents of the administration in calling for President Arroyo's ouster). Neri returns to his former position as Director General of the National Economic Development Authority.

-- Dr. Esperanza Cabral was named Secretary of the Department of Social Welfare and Development. A cardiologist, Cabral formerly headed the Philippine Heart Center. She replaced Lual Hati Pablo, who temporarily occupied the position following the resignation of Secretary Corazon "Dinky" Soliman, who joined the Opposition in July 2005 (ref E).

-- Edgardo Pamintuan was appointed Chairman of the Subic-Clark Area Development Authority, a newly-created position. Pamintuan, who hails from the President's home province of Pampanga, located northwest of Manila, had served as Arroyo's Adviser for External Affairs.

16. (U) Without elaborating, Ermita said more appointments will be announced in coming weeks.

17. (SBU) Comment: The Cabinet changes announced on February 5 contained no major surprises. Mission contacts had hinted of these appointments as early as mid-January (ref B). In filling the positions, Arroyo elected to stick with experienced political players like Puno who had demonstrated proven loyalty to her.

MANILA 00000529 002 OF 002

Jones